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U.S. Pressing Soviets On 'Shared Interest' In U-2 Monitor Flights

From News Services

The United States has told the Soviet Union that a SALT II treaty will be in danger unless the Soviets accept — quietly, if necessary — American U-2 flights along its southern borders, administration officials say.

Officials told the Soviets the high-altitude flights will be "in the shared interest" of both countries, because key members of the U.S. Senate will not vote to ratify a SALT II pact unless they are convinced it will be adequately verified.

Turkey's Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit is insisting on Soviet consent before allowing U-2 flights through Turkish airspace, and U.S. officials are worried that if Ecevit insist on formal consent, he won't get it.

Deputy Prime Minister Hikmet Cetin said yesterday that what is needed is something to assure the Turkish people that the Soviets don't object. He warned that even with Soviet clearance, Turkey might not agree to the flights. "This affects the whole country," he said.

The flights through Turkish air space would be a stopgap measure to temporarily replace two U.S. monitoring stations in Iran. Eventually U.S. satellites would be able to take over the job, but the design and launching of the permanent monitors could take years.

American officials said the United States does not expect public Soviet acceptance of the flights, in light of the sensitive political memories of the 1960 shooting down of a U-2 piloted by Francis Gary Powers.

But they said the United States does hope for a tacit understanding, which would include an assurance by the Soviet Union the flights would not be used to launch a propaganda exercise against the troubled Turkish government.

The Soviets were also told there is a connection, in practical political terms, between their cooperation on SALT verification and their expressed desire to receive "Most Favored Nation" trade treatment.

The U.S. administration has tried to avoid any direct, explicit link between the strategic arms limitation treaty and any other matters involving the United States and the Soviet Union.